

In the claims

1. (Currently Amended) A trouble tracking system, comprising:

a server in communication with an electronic network;

a database in communication with the server, the database storing a plurality of trouble tickets;

a user computer in communication with the network and having access, via a graphical user interface (GUI), to the server, the graphical user interface including at least one screen, the screen being operable to manually enter a new trouble ticket along with (i) a person responsible for resolving the ticket, (ii) a severity level for the trouble ticket with the severity being indicated as a number on a scale between an initial number indicating a lowest severity and a last number indicating a highest severity wherein the number is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (iii) an indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated where the ~~severity has been manually increased~~ trouble ticket has not been timely resolved such that a higher level of management is required wherein the indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (iv) an identifier of a process in which a problem has occurred that has necessitated the trouble ticket, ~~(v) a field that receives a manually entered identifier of a process in which a problem has occurred that has necessitated the trouble ticket,~~ ~~(vi) a field that receives a manually entered an~~ an identifier of a root of the process in which the problem has occurred; and wherein the screen is further operable to store the trouble ticket in the database;

a duplicate ticket module in communication with the database wherein the duplicate ticket module periodically screens the trouble tickets to identify one or more duplicate trouble tickets, flags the one or more duplicate trouble tickets to associate the one or more duplicate trouble tickets as a closed ticket and generates a list of duplicate trouble tickets, detects closure of a ticket flagged as a duplicate, and closes all of the one or more duplicates that are associated with the closed ticket;

a paging system, in communication with the server, wherein when the severity level associated with the trouble ticket is above a predetermined threshold number on the

scale, the server automatically initiates a call to the person responsible via the paging system; and

means for communicating with and sharing trouble ticket data with an organization that operates under outside contract, the organization assigning its own tracking number to a given trouble ticket, the tracking number being stored in the database of the trouble tracking system,

wherein the database stores information relating to whether an attempted resolution of a trouble ticket by outsourced personnel who work for the organization has been approved by internal personnel for whom the outsourced personnel are working and wherein the trouble ticket is designated as closed within the database upon the information relating to approval being provided by the internal personnel and indicating that the resolution is approved.

2. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, further comprising an email server, wherein the email server automatically sends an email message to the person responsible for resolving the ticket and the email message includes at least a trouble ticket number.

3. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, further comprising a report creation module, the report creation module being operable to generate reports based on the plurality of trouble tickets stored in the database.

4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) The trouble tracking system of claim [[4]] 1, wherein the duplicate ~~search~~ ticket module lists at least one pair of the actual or potential duplicate trouble tickets.

6. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, wherein the trouble tickets comprise at least one of a problem, an inquiry, a bill notification and a user acceptance data issue.

7-8. (Canceled)

9. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, wherein the database further stores status information.

10. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, wherein the database further stores information associating a trouble ticket to a geographical region.

11. (Original) The trouble tracking system of claim 1, wherein the network comprises the Internet.

12. (Currently Amended) A system for managing issue resolution, comprising:

a plurality of computers interconnected in a network, one of the computers including a trouble ticket database and an executable program for accessing and updating the database and each of the computers having access to a graphical user interface (GUI), the GUI including at least one screen operable to add a new trouble ticket to the database, each trouble ticket including at least (i) a description of the an issue, (ii) a person responsible for resolving the issue and (iii) a severity level of the issue with the severity level being indicated as a number on a scale between an initial number indicating a lowest severity and a last number indicating a highest severity wherein the number is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (iv) an indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated because the ~~severity level has been manually increased~~ trouble ticket has not been timely handled and requires a higher level of management wherein the indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI;

a duplicate ticket module in communication with the database wherein the duplicate ticket module periodically screens the trouble tickets to identify one or more duplicate trouble tickets, flags the one or more duplicate trouble tickets to associate the one or more duplicate trouble tickets as a closed ticket and generates a list of duplicate trouble tickets, detects closure of a ticket flagged as a duplicate, and closes all of the one

or more duplicates that are associated with the closed ticket;

an email system in communication with the executable program, the executable program automatically emailing a trouble ticket number to the person responsible for resolving the issue;

a paging system, the paging system automatically paging the person responsible for resolving the issue based on whether the trouble ticket has been escalated when the severity level of the trouble ticket is above a predetermined threshold;

means for communicating with and sharing trouble ticket data with an organization that operates under outside contract, the organization assigning its own tracking number to a given trouble ticket, the tracking number being stored in the database,

wherein the organization updates the database, and

wherein the database stores information relating to whether an attempted resolution of a trouble ticket by outsourced personnel who work for the organization has been approved by internal personnel for whom the outsourced personnel are working and wherein the trouble ticket is designated as closed within the database upon the information relating to approval being provided by the internal personnel and indicating that the resolution is approved.

13. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the paging system transmits the trouble ticket number.

14. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the screen operable to add a new trouble ticket includes fields for indicating the status of the trouble ticket and closed date of the trouble ticket.

15. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the trouble ticket is associated with a geographical area.

16. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the trouble ticket is one of a problem, an inquiry, a bill notification and user acceptance testing data.

17. (Original) The system of claim 12, further comprising a duplicate trouble ticket module.

18. (Original) The system of claim 12, further comprising a report creation module.

19. (Original) The system of claim 12, wherein the database is accessible via the Internet.

20-28. (Cancelled)

29. (Currently Amended) A method for tracking trouble tickets, comprising the steps of:

- providing a trouble ticket database;
- screening the database to identify one or more duplicate trouble tickets;
- flagging the one or more duplicate trouble tickets as a closed ticket;
- generating a list of duplicate trouble tickets;
- accessing, via a network, a graphical user interface (GUI), the graphical user interface including at least one screen, the screen being operable to enter a new trouble ticket along with (i) a person responsible for resolving the trouble ticket, (ii) a severity level for the trouble ticket, and to store the trouble ticket in the database and (iii) the severity level being indicated as a number on a scale between an initial number indicating a lowest severity and a last number indicating a highest severity wherein the number is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (iv) an indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated for failure to be handled within a prescribed time wherein the indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI;

- paging the person responsible based on whether the trouble ticket has been escalated when the severity level associated with the trouble ticket is above a predetermined threshold;

- communicating with and sharing trouble ticket data with an organization that operates under outside contract, the organization assigning its own tracking number to a

given trouble ticket, the tracking number being stored in the trouble ticket database, and storing in the trouble ticket database information relating to whether an attempted resolution of a trouble ticket by outsourced personnel who work for the organization has been approved by internal personnel for whom the outsourced personnel are working and wherein the trouble ticket is designated as closed within the database upon the information relating to approval being provided by the internal personnel and indicating that the resolution is approved; and

analyzing the trouble tickets to determine whether duplicates of a first trouble ticket exist, flagging the duplicates to associate them with the first trouble ticket, detecting when the first trouble ticket has closed, and closing the flagged duplicates in response to detecting that the first trouble ticket has closed.

30. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising emailing the person responsible with at least a trouble ticket number.

31. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising creating a report based on a plurality of trouble tickets stored in the database.

32. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising searching the database for duplicate trouble tickets.

33. (Original) The method of claim 29, wherein the trouble tickets comprise at least one of a problem, an inquiry, a bill notification and a user acceptance data issue.

34-35. (Canceled)

36. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising storing status information.

37. (Original) The method of claim 29, further comprising storing information associating a trouble ticket to a geographical region.

38. (Currently Amended) A method for managing issue resolution, comprising the steps of:

connecting a plurality of computers in a network, one of the computers including a trouble ticket database and an executable program for accessing and updating the database and each of the computers having access to a graphical user interface (GUI), the GUI including at least one screen operable to add new trouble ticket to the database, each trouble ticket including at least (i) a description of an issue, (ii) a person responsible for resolving the issue and (iii) a severity level of the issue with the severity level being indicated as a number on a scale between an initial number indicating a lowest severity and a last number indicating a highest severity wherein the number is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (iv) an indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated for failure to be handled within a prescribed time wherein the indication that a status of the trouble ticket has been escalated is manually entered via the GUI and is fixed until being manually changed via the GUI, (v) a field that receives a manually entered identifier of a process in which a problem has occurred that has necessitated the trouble ticket, (v) a field that receives a manually entered identifier of a root of the process in which the problem has occurred;

screening the trouble ticket database to identify one or more duplicate trouble tickets;

flagging the one or more duplicate trouble tickets ~~as a closed ticket~~ to associate them together;

generating a list of duplicate trouble tickets;

detecting that one of the duplicate trouble tickets has been closed;

in response to the one of the duplicate trouble tickets being closed, closing the duplicate trouble tickets associated to it;

emailing a trouble ticket number to the person responsible for resolving the issue based on whether the trouble ticket has been escalated;

automatically paging the person responsible for resolving the issue based on whether the trouble ticket has been escalated when the severity level of the trouble ticket is above a predetermined threshold;

communicating with and sharing trouble ticket data with an organization that

operates under outside contract, the organization assigning its own tracking number to a given trouble ticket, the tracking number being stored in the database,

wherein the organization updates the database, and storing in the database information relating to whether a resolution of an attempted trouble ticket by outsourced personnel who work for the organization has been approved by internal personnel for whom the outsourced personnel are working and wherein the trouble ticket is designated as closed within the database upon the information relating to approval being provided by the internal personnel and indicating that the resolution is approved.

39. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising transmitting the trouble ticket number in the paging step.

40. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising storing a status of the trouble ticket and a closed date of the trouble ticket.

41. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising associating the trouble ticket with a geographical area.

42. (Original) The method of claim 38, wherein the trouble ticket is one of a problem, inquiry, a bill notification and user acceptance testing data.

43. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising searching for duplicate trouble tickets.

44. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising creating a report based on a plurality of trouble tickets.

45. (Original) The method of claim 38, further comprising accessing the database via the Internet.

46.-53. (Cancelled)